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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (ADDED ADDRESSEES)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/23/2018
TAGS: PHUM PGOV APER KSOCI KIRF ASEC ER
SUBJECT: THE SAD STORY OF FORMER EMBASSY ASMARA LES DANIEL HAILE

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald K. McMullen for reason 1.4 (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In May, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ, the ruling political party of Eritrea) called the Embassy to request the dismissal of its employee, Daniel Haile. The Embassy refused to accede to the request and protested the action to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The MFA intervened with the party and asked why this action had been taken. The PFDJ claims that Daniel was required to work for the party and was collecting paychecks from the Eritrean government while working for the U.S. government. The MFA told the Management Officer (MO) that Daniel would be arrested and prosecuted. Daniel chose to flee the country rather than face Eritrean justice. End Summary

¶2. (C) On May 7, two members of the PFDJ named Demetros and Fessehasien went to the home of Daniel Haile and told him that he must resign his position at the U.S. Embassy because "the U.S. Government is the enemy of Eritrea and we don't want Eritreans working for the U.S. Embassy." The two officials stated that if Daniel did not resign his position in three days, he and his family would be arrested. They further stated that they would be calling the Embassy to say that he was no longer eligible to work here. Demetros Afwerki of the PFDJ called the Embassy Human Resources section the following day. He told the HR Specialist that if Daniel Haile is working for the Embassy he must be fired immediately. When the HR staff member asked why, he was told "because he has not completed his national service."

¶3. (C) The Management Officer (MO) promptly called the MFA to protest this action to the Protocol Chief, Fesseha Ghebrehiwet. MFA agreed that it is not permissible for party officials to get directly involved in Embassy matters. Only the MFA is permitted to make demands of foreign missions here, Fesseha stated. MO said the Embassy would take no action against Daniel Haile until the matter was fully clarified. Daniel was advised to take leave, which he did. Fesseha contacted Demetros Afwerki directly and asked him why he contacted the Embassy. Demetros explained that he was merely "verifying Daniel's employment with the Embassy." Demetros claims that Daniel works for the party and has been drawing two paychecks without showing up for work at the PFDJ, which is against the law.

¶4. (S) As a result of MFA's conversation with Demetros, Daniel received a beating consisting of at least two serious

blows to the head with fists from Demetros and Fessehasion and was again told that he had to quit. The Management Officer went to the MFA on July 9th to receive the results of the MFA's investigation into the matter. Fesseha stated that PFDJ will refrain from ever contacting the Embassy directly in the future. However, he said it was clear to him that Daniel Haile violated the law. MO demonstrated to Fesseha that Daniel was legally hired in 1999 and had a full waiver from National Service obligations at that time. Fesseha accepted this waiver as proof that the Embassy did not act in a manner contrary to Eritrean law, but he said that Daniel knew that he had duties with the PFDJ that required him to resign his position at the Embassy. He added that Daniel's offense was serious and he would be arrested and subject to criminal proceedings. He asked that Daniel be fired immediately. MO responded that Daniel has served for ten years and cannot be instantly replaced. A period of training of 1-2 months would be required. Fesseha said that he would convince PFDJ that one week was needed to replace Daniel.

¶5. (S) Daniel was immediately informed of the discussion by the Ambassador, MO, and Regional Security Officer (RSO). Daniel decided to resign to protect his family from arrest. Two days later he fled Asmara. He subsequently sent an e-mail to the RSO stating that he had successfully escaped to Sudan. His current whereabouts, however, are unknown.

WHY DID THIS HAPPEN TO DANIEL?

¶6. (C) On February 22nd, the RSO fired Isaac Abraham, the Local Guard Force Commander. The reason for the termination related to a failure to report five separate security incidents. It was known to Embassy staff that Isaac reported regularly to the Eritrean National Security Agency (ENSA)

WHY WERE ISAAC ABRAHAM'S ACTIONS SO EFFECTIVE?

¶7. (C) Local law stipulates that Eritreans can be summoned to do National Service work until the age of 40. In practice, however, men remain subject until age 54 and women are subject until age 47. Medical waivers have been granted for many members of the United Nations (UN) and U.S. staff. It is assumed that these waivers are kept in force because UN and U.S. staff are actively reporting to the ENSA on their activities, which is itself a form of unpaid National Service. These waivers can be revoked at any time. In 2000, Daniel had his waiver from military service upheld, but his waiver from National Service was revoked. He was then summoned to work by the PFDJ. Several other members of the local guard force had the same experience around the same time. They informed the RSO, and he agreed to adjust their shifts to permit them to keep their jobs at the Embassy. National Service pay averages \$30 per month or less. In 2003, Daniel was promoted to the position of residential security technician. This required that Daniel be on-duty during day time hours which directly conflicted with his position at the PFDJ. However, the PFDJ supervisor at the time did not have a problem with Daniel's not coming to work and there were no difficulties until this May.

¶8. (C) Comment: The brutish and amateurish nature of the PFDJ's approach to this matter leads the Embassy to believe that the attack on Daniel Haile was an act of revenge carried out by friends of Isaac Abraham and not an effort on the part of the Eritrean Government to target local employees of the

U.S. Embassy. The incident is a clear demonstration of how vulnerable and without recourse the citizenry is in a society where security figures are at liberty to target individuals and families without the need for supervisory clearance or permission. It also shows the MFA as a willing participant in random, extrajudicial enforcement actions carried out against Eritrean citizens. End Comment.

MCMULLEN